

# ADVENTURE FOR GOD

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## The Place of Missions in Christian Education

BY

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## FOREWORD

AN educated, intelligent, and good hearted officer at the front, Rev. Herbert Gray tells us, explained to a Padre that he did not like religion. 'It's such a selfish thing.'

When something of the real nature of Christianity was made clear to him, he replied, 'Well, if you are right, it means that I and hundreds of thousands of other people in Great Britain simply don't know what Christianity is.'

We must not allow the young people in our Churches to grow up in this ignorance, above all in these days of crisis.

This little book glows with vision of that selfless service which is at the very heart of Christianity, and it contains most valuable suggestions for all who are in any way responsible for the Christian education of boys and girls. It merits careful study.

Further information about material and methods may always be obtained from the London Missionary Society.

MAY O. PELTON

*(Educational Assistant).*



# ADVENTURE FOR GOD

## The Place of Missions in Christian Education

### I

#### **The Aim of Christian Education**

THE central aim of all education is the building of character, through the development and discipline of the feelings and the mind.

The aim, therefore, of a Christian education is the growth of a Christian character, a personality in which simplicity, strength, courage, purity, faith and active love have become second nature. Success in life to the Christian teacher is to lead growing children on toward a measure of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

Central to the whole of such an education is the presentation to the child of the Faith by which we live. That Faith—our Gospel—is not originally or primarily either a book or a creed or an organization. It is a life before it is a system. The historic and eternal narrative of the Gospel is in the Bible, and the Faith does, of course, necessarily formulate its truths in a creed and draw its disciples together into an organization. The Bible, the Creed, and the Church, are, indeed, essential instruments of the Gospel. But in itself the Good News is a Force issuing from a Person and ending in a Kingdom.

The very core of the Christian Faith is in the fact that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The heart of God is essentially missionary, for He has, as Madame Guyon says, ‘an infinite desire to communicate Himself.’ Livingstone distilled the quintessence of the Gospel when he said, ‘God had an only Son, and He was a missionary.’

Christianity, then, is not only a Force, it is an



Expeditionary Force. It is a Good News which must, by its very nature, be communicated from generation to generation, and from race to race. It is a Message which must be delivered. It is a seed planted which must grow or rot. And if it is pot-bound, either it dies or the pot is burst. In a word, it is essentially missionary.

Any Christian education, then, that misses the missionary element in the Gospel has offered the shell for the kernel. Whatever such an education may have gained it has lost its own soul. The teaching of the missionary element in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament, is essential to a full-blooded and vital Christian education. It is also strongly reinforced, particularly for the child-mind by teaching in addition the modern missionary story. As has been said, 'Missions are the Acts of the Apostles in serial form "continued in our next" till the end of time.' For a child to trace the essential similarities between the careers of Paul and Livingstone does not merely emphasize the greatness of Livingstone; it illuminates the living reality of Paul. From the point of view, then, of the Christian Faith, the teaching of its missionary element is not only religiously sound—it is essential.

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### **The Mind of the Child**

It might, nevertheless, be urged that this missionary teaching, however right it may be in the realm of religion, is wrong as a subject for teaching because it does violence to the mind of the child. The nature of the missionary motive and material, it might be argued, is foreign to the young mind. It makes impossible demands on the intellectual powers and emotional capacities of childhood.

The exact opposite seems to be true. The child desires to see a thing moving and acting. A thing becomes real when it works. A watch is a watch if it ticks and the 'weels go wound.' The child names his animals by the noises they make. Similarly, the



Gospel is most easily apprehended by the child when it is seen at work in the world. Missions are Christianity in action. Many a child has never realized the reality of the New Testament Faith till he has seen it at work in Mackay and Chalmers.

For this purpose the teaching material provided by Foreign Missions is the finest in the whole realm of modern life. Youth glories in war; and the missionary enterprise is 'The moral equivalent for war.' The stirring stories of the heroes of the enterprise, their mighty adventures of faith, their chivalry and daring sacrifice for the weak and ignorant, the drama of their life on a hundred shores amid the splendours of the East, the savagery of the South Seas and the tangled forests of Africa, grip and hold the child.

The missionary material, indeed, like all the subject matter of any teaching whatever, can be used in a way that will harm the character and debase both the emotions and the intellect. The missionary material, for instance, has frequently been used with more zeal than wisdom to awaken a sense of pity. Pity is, we are told, akin to love; but, uninformed and undisciplined, it is often first cousin to contempt. It may well be that much existing adult lethargy toward missions is due to the precocious forcing of emotions of pity unchallenged and undisciplined by knowledge. The 'poor heathen' of the child becomes so easily the 'damned nigger' of the adult.

This danger, through the wrong selection and presentation of the material, does not, however, break down our general position. It only emphasizes the need for a sound educational method in the production of our material in literature and in its use with the children.



## II

**The Material**

THE fitness of the missionary material for the development of character in the child is not simply a general suitability. At each successive stage of the development of the boy and girl the missionary material is equipped with precisely the elements that will achieve that aim of Christian education which we have already laid down—the development and discipline of the feelings and the mind.

In our Christian Gospel the thought that is most natural to the mind of the child from six to eight years old and most relevant to his normal environment is the Fatherhood of God. A rich reinforcement of this idea comes through introducing the child to God's wonderful world family. That God has made them all, and that His brown and yellow, red and black children have an equal share with the white boys and girls in His love transforms and irradiates the child's whole thought of God's Fatherhood. It stirs his sense of wonder, deepens his reverence and enlarges the horizon of his love. At the same time this knowledge quickens a seedling of world-kinship that can grow in later years to a deep-rooted sense of brotherhood. The value of such teaching lies not simply or even mainly in its direct help to missions. It lies essentially in the glorious illustration that it gives to the child of the wonder and power and beauty of the love of the Father who is in Heaven—'Hallowed be His name!'

In the boy and girl from nine to eleven a new range of interests open, a fresh order of emotions emerge. Admiration for daring and for physical prowess, the craving for adventure and for new experience, begin to dominate motive and quicken the powers into action. In matters of the Faith, then, the boy and girl alike is gripped less by the thought of the Father-nature of God than by the stories of His mighty men



and noble women. Gideon and David, Miriam and Deborah, step into the foreground.

In the earlier stages of adolescence (12-15) these characteristics are emphasized and developed—with a stronger hero-worship comes the beginning of interest in the motive behind the actions. The craving for new adventurous experience becomes supreme—all life is a matter of tremendous interest and significance—therefore the ideal of these growing boys and girls must be a living human person, and one whose experiences are something akin to those of the explorer, soldier, big-game hunter, Red Cross nurse, etc. At this stage the story of missionary heroism makes an immense contribution to the ideals of the boy and girl and to their religion. They see that ‘God is glorious in His saints.’ ‘Longing to do things finds expression in working groups who make things for the Mission field.’

As adolescence develops the interest in motive increases and with the deepening of personal religion comes the craving for personal service. At this stage perhaps the missionary aspect of Christianity makes its greatest appeal—it not only offers an opportunity for unlimited and adventurous personal service and sacrifice—but linking up the whole Church of God throughout the world it makes the worker in Sunday School, Scout Troop, etc., one with Chalmers, among the swamps of Papua, and Anna Hinderer and her black children in far-off Africa.



## III

**The Picture and the Story**

WE have seen that missionary material, rightly selected and presented at each stage of its development, is a rational integral element in a Christian education, and entirely suited to the mind of the child. We have also glanced at the perils of a wrong selection and presentation of the material. We see that precocious emotions, inordinately stirred at the wrong stage in the child's life, and uncorrected and unchallenged by adequate knowledge, may spell calamity. It is through the development and discipline of mind and feeling in a right atmosphere, and through the stimulus and strengthening of will by active service, that the full Christian character is developed and a steady convinced support of missions by the whole life is secured.

Translated into practical terms this means that the missionary material must be related to the general religious teaching of the children. It must be woven into the very warp and woof of their prayers. It must be rightly selected in relation to the grade of the child's development. It must become a real part of the teacher's own personality. It must be as integral and central to the life of the teacher, the class, and the school, as Acts and the missionary letters of St. Paul are to the New Testament. The first and most immediate part of the problem of achieving this aim lies in making the right material ready to the hand of the teacher. To-day, for the first time, this has been achieved in a considerable degree for each main age. Not only so, but in the senior grade provision has been made for some of the educational and occupational differences in type, e.g. the working-boy and the public school-boy.

**For the Youngest**

For the youngest children the thought of world brotherhood is implicit in the *Book of Babies* series.



The pictures, the short chapters descriptive of the home life of the babies across the sea, and the suggestions for 'things to do' to make that home life more real to English children, are of permanent value to mothers and to teachers both in Sunday School and Day School.

For children who are ready to follow and appreciate narrative, the larger Kindergarten series provide for the same needs by means of stories of the childhood of other lands.

### **For Hero Worshippers**

At the later stage of childhood when heroic deeds begin to make their appeal and new lands and strange people have a deep fascination—material is plentiful in such books as *Chalmers the Peace Scout*, *Williams the Seafarer*, the '*Lessons*' Series. These are specially written for Sunday Schools, whilst the *Talks* series provide for week evening Meetings of every description. For classes of adolescent boys and girls the *Yarns* series have been written for the express purpose of combining the attractions of pirates with the qualities of saints, and of picturing in sharp outline and vivid colour the achievements of a religion whose very soul is Adventure.

For girls of fifteen and over the *Heroines* series supply much the same picture of adventurous chivalry, and are so written as to guide the teacher and link up the ordinary activities of the Club or Brigade with the life which is being studied.

### **For Public School-Boys and Girls**

Public school-boys and girls with some knowledge of history and interest in the world outside school can find in *The Secret of the Raj*, *The Story of Islam*, *The Daybreak Call*, the same note of adventure and ideal of heroism combined with an appeal to the true sort of patriotism whose motto is 'Ich Dien'—'I serve.' These last-named books are meant for private reading as well as for Study Circles—*The Pathfinder*



series supplies this need for older children as well as adolescents. All the books written for teachers give detailed references to sources from which extra information and background may be gathered, and these sources are easily obtainable through the libraries of the various societies. It is a point worth noting that the books prepared for teachers are within the reach of the poorest, and that the extra literature needed can be had for the small sum which a library subscription implies.

The solution of the problem of the right material, however, does not solve the still more difficult problem of the right use of it. Enthusiasts for missionary education have sometimes urged a course of lessons emphasizing the (idea of the universal) Fatherhood of God on a class of infants who had not yet realized His particular Fatherhood for themselves. They have told stories of heroes taking the Gospel to cannibals to children who have a very hazy and muddled impression of Him Who first preached it, or what it is. But whilst missionary stories do help to interpret Christianity to the child—they pre-suppose a religious training without which their value is largely diminished. Sound missionary teaching can only exist if it is an element in a sound general religious education—and the new missionary material should force teachers to reconsider the selection of Bible material and the methods used in the ordinary Sunday School class as well as the position of the missionary material in the annual course of lessons.

For older children and adolescents, the lessons follow most naturally after the stories from Acts or the Gospel story itself, but may also serve to enrich the meaning of heroism by completing a series of lessons on Old Testament heroes.

In Primary Departments and Infant Classes they can be linked up with any set of lessons showing God's care for all living creatures. The individual lesson, too, should have its appropriate setting of hymns and prayers. It is not at all necessary that the hymn



contain any direct reference to the evangelization of the world—the thought of the lesson can very frequently be expressed in some familiar and favourite hymn which does no violence to the child's somewhat limited outlook.

The lesson, however, does not finish with Sunday. The people of far countries become much more real and living to the child if he is introduced to their life in a more detailed way in the week—seeing pictures and curios, learning of their manners and customs, hearing their fairy stories and playing their games. (See *Talks* and *Missionary Play Hours*.) A yet more vital link is established when he makes a definite act of friendship by helping to make gifts for them, thus continuing the work of the missionary hero whose story he has learnt and loved. (See *Missionary Work Parties for Boys and Girls*.)

Right material and right methods may, nevertheless, fail to achieve these ends if the teacher who uses them is not himself gripped by the ideal they present. 'Your first duty to a story is to love it' is a maxim of fundamental importance. Another danger is that of much enthusiasm and little preparation on the teacher's part. The kind of mid-week conference on missionary education which sends out enthusiasts to begin a course of missionary lessons 'the very next Sunday' is fraught with disaster. A background of knowledge and inspiration is necessary before that knowledge can be communicated in a special way. For this purpose the Study Circle and special Training Classes are invaluable. (See *How to Lead a Study Circle*.)

Lastly, and most important of all. It is not the special preparation only, but the teacher's whole attitude to the sublime adventure of Christianity that makes the lesson a vital force in the life of the child.



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